

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
2024/25 1st semester
PHIL 4443 Seminar on Philosophical Issues:
Consequentialism and its critics
Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Kwok Pak Nin, Samson
Time: Thursday 10:30-13:15
Venue: LSK 514

Course overview:

This course aims to be a comprehensive introduction to Consequentialism. It will introduce and critically examine the major theories in Consequentialism, such as Act and rule Consequentialism, Motive and Virtue Consequentialism, and Kantian Consequentialism. The second part of the course will focus on the current critics on Consequentialism, some of the following topics will be discussed: Aggregation, Agent-relativity and Agent-neutrality, Demandingness, and Integrity.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the basic concepts and major theories in Consequentialism.
- Understand the strengths and weakness of Consequentialism.
- Demonstrate familiarity with major arguments in the current philosophical debates over Consequentialism and its critics.
- Acquire skills in argumentative discussion and in writing about the debate on Consequentialism and normative ethics in general.
- Enhance the ability of logical reasoning and argumentation by discussing ethical issues related to Consequentialism

Learning activities and workload:

- 1. Lecture:** 1.25 hours each week.
- 2. In Class Discussion and Presentation:** 1.25 hours each week, Students are required to discuss and present reading material assigned.

Assessment:

Task nature	Description	Weight
Discussion and Presentation	In class Discussion and Presentation	30%
Reading Assignment	Evaluating Article x 2	30%
Paper	Term-end Research Paper	40%

Grade Descriptors:

http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Late submission policy:

Assignments submitted after the due date will incur a 10% grade reduction per day. Extensions will only be granted in cases of unexpected or exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control.

Details of course website:

Lecture notes and information on assignments will be posted on the Blackboard Learn website.

Topics & schedule:

Week	Date	Discussion	Lecture	Remark
1	Sept 5		Introduction: From Consequentialism to Utilitarianism	
2	Sept 12	J.S.Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch.2	Consequentialism and Deontology	
3	Sept 19	Philip Pettit, “Consequentialism and Respect for Persons”	Act and Rule Consequentialism	
4	Sept 26	J. J. C. Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism”, & Brad Hooker, <i>Ideal code, Real World</i> , ch.4 (selection)	Motive and Virtue Consequentialism	
5	Oct 3	Robert. M. Adams, “Motive Utilitarianism”	Subjective and Objective Consequentialism	
6	Oct 10	Frank Jackson, “Decision- theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection.”	Hedonistic and Pluralistic Consequentialism	
7	Oct 17	Amartya Sen, “Plural Utility”	Kantian Consequentialism	
8	Oct 24	David Cummiskey, “Kantian Consequentialism” (selection)	Critics: Aggregation	<u>Evaluating Article #1 Submission</u>
9	Oct 31	Alastair Norcross, “Comparing Harms: Headaches and Human Lives.” (selection)	Critics: Agent-relativity and Agent-neutrality	
10	Nov 7	Thomas Nagel, <i>The view from nowhere</i> , ch.9	Critics: Options and Constraints	
11	Nov 14	Samuel Scheffler, “Prerogatives without Restrictions”	Critics: Demandingness	
12	Nov 21	Shelly Kagan, “Does Consequentialism demand too much?”	Critics: Moral Alienation and Integrity	
13	Nov 28	Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism” (selection)	Consequentialization	<u>Evaluating Article #2 Submission</u>

Recommended learning resources:

Brandt, Richard. (1979). <i>A Theory of the Good and the Right</i> , New York: Oxford University Press.
Broome, John. (1991). <i>Weighing Goods</i> , Oxford: Basil Blackwell
Cummiskey, David (1996). <i>Kantian Consequentialism</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.
Darwall, Stephen. (ed.). (2003). <i>Consequentialism</i> , Oxford: Blackwell.
Driver, Julia. (2012). <i>Consequentialism</i> , Routledge Press.
Frankena, W. K. (1963). <i>Ethics</i> . Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

- Frey, R.G. (Eds.) (1984). *Utility and Rights*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hare, R. M. (1981). *Moral Thinking: Its Levels, Method, and Point*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hooker, Brad. (2000). *Ideal code, Real World: A Rule-consequentialist Theory of Morality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kagan, Shelly. (1989). *The Limits of Morality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kagan, Shelly. (1998). *Normative Ethics*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. (1953). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. (Paton, H. J. Trans.). London: Hutchison. (Original work published 1785).
- Lyons, David. (1965). *Forms and Limits of Utilitarianism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mackie, J. L. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin: Harmondsworth.
- Mill, J. S. (1998). *Utilitarianism*. (ed. by Crisp, Roger.). New York: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1861).
- Moore, G. E. (1903). *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mulgan, Tim. (2001). *The Demands of Consequentialism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nagel, Thomas (1986). *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nozick, Robert. (1974). *Anarchy, state, and utopia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Parfit, Derek. (1984). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Parfit, Derek. (2011). *On What Matters Vol.1*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rawls, John. (1999). *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Scanlon, T. M (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Sidgwick, Henry. (1907). *The Methods of Ethics* (7th ed.). Macmillan: London.
- Scheffler, Samuel (1994). *The Rejection of Consequentialism: A Philosophical Investigation of the Considerations Underlying Rival Moral Conceptions: Revised Edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Smart, J. J. C & Williams, B. (1973). *Utilitarianism: For and Against*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. (1985). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Wood, Allen. (2008). *Kantian Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Reading list:

Topic-specific lists of references, required and suggested readings will be given in lecture notes and bibliographical notes (separate) for each topic.

Feedback for evaluation:

1. Students are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the course via email or meetings with lecturer.
2. Students evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback between teacher and students. This information is highly valued and is used to revise teaching methods, tasks, and content.

Contact:

Lecturer	
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Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.